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STATE OF MONTANA

Exhibit No. 2
Date 1-18
Bill No. 198

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

Testimony on behalf of Governor Brian Schweitzer
Senate Bill 198, Teacher Recruitment Loan Forgiveness Program
Before the Senate Judiciary Committee, January 18, 2007, 8:00 AM

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Jan Lombardi, and I am Governor Brian Schweitzer's education policy advisor.

It is my pleasure to be here this morning in support of the concept of teacher loan forgiveness in Senate Bill 198, sponsored by Senator Kitzenberg that is also contained in Senate Bill 152 which has already passed out of the Senate Education committee.

Governor Schweitzer's wants to build a strong academic future for all Montana's children and build a strong workforce for tomorrow. We know that education matters from the youngest Montanans getting ready for school and having access to full-time kindergarten to adults wanting to afford college.

Quality teachers are the foundation of quality schools. And too many Montana schools have difficulty finding and hiring quality educators. Even more importantly, some of the smallest and most rural schools have the greatest challenge. A loan forgiveness program is a way to help Montana schools in critical geographic and subject shortage areas. By eliminating some or all of the college loan debt for teachers, we can provide an incentive to some of our home-grown, high-quality teachers to stay and teach in Montana.

The governor supports this mechanism for recruiting and retaining teachers and has included the establishment of a quality educator loan forgiveness program in his school funding bill, Senate Bill 152 and also has \$1 million of funding included in the HB2 budget. If for some reason SB 152 does not pass the house, or this important provision is removed from it, Senator Kitzenberg's bill might prove to be a valuable backup.

On behalf of Governor Brian Schweitzer, I ask this committee to support a loan forgiveness concept for teachers. Thank you.